



The Jewish

# Gaily Forward

Adar+Nisan 5774 ■ March+April 2014

## The Test of Inclusion

*Excerpts from a Rosh Hashanah Drash, September 6, 2013*

BY HELEN S. COHEN

In the story of the Binding of Isaac, Abraham is asked by God to do the impossible—to sacrifice his cherished son. The story urges us to think about the things we are dealt in life—the huge challenges that we could never imagine being able to manage—what Rabbi Bradley Artson refers to as “Life’s Tests” (capital “L,” capital “T”).

The biggest capital T test for me personally has been raising a child with a developmental disability. As parents of any kind of child, we are often asked to go beyond what we think we can handle—to dig deep into our own inner resources. That was the case for me when my daughter Anna was diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) at four years old—a medical euphemism at the time for Autism. (She’s 21 now and is doing phenomenally well—attending an independent living college program in Boston. She’s my hero when it comes to stepping up to Life’s Tests.)

Anna started attending Hebrew school at Sha’ar Zahav when she was in first grade. Though I pulled her out of the regular classroom because she couldn’t understand any of the curriculum, she developed a bond with her classmates and with the entire community. The idea of her bat mitzvah was something that was a work in progress for several years as I tried to imagine what it might look like, what she might be capable of, how to set expectations and hopes at the right level... Maybe she would just chant the shema, maybe some kind of musical extravaganza that would not be recognizable as a bat mitzvah at all, maybe with just with a handful of familiar people...

We were met with support and open arms here every step of the way. Full inclusion was on display in full force and the bat mitzvah proved to be truly transformative—not just for her and for us, her family and close friends, but for everyone who experienced it. I don’t think there was a dry eye in the house.

Anna gave an amazing drash that focused on the concept of community. In it she referred to the ten commandments as “the ten good rules” needed to make a

community work and talked about the importance of helping people, the way that Moses got help when he needed it, and she described the help she had gotten throughout her life. It was beautiful, and, in a way, it was a tribute to this community and the people who came together to help her here. We all kvelled.

The whole concept of diversity and inclusion is already a mainstay of this community, an essential ingredient of its very soul. Sha’ar Zahav is a Jewish LGBT community that was established and prides itself (pun intended) on stretching the boundaries of diversity, identity and personal expression. Anna’s bat mitzvah showcased this community at its best, the willingness of this community to reach outside its comfort zone and to commit to inclusivity. Collectively, we said “Hineni”—and it was amazing. *(continued on page 6)*

### Access Shabbat FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 7:30 PM

The new CSZ Access Task Force is proud to announce the very first Access Shabbat service on Friday, April 11.

Our group was formed because disability and chronic illness have affected many of our lives and the lives of people we love, and we want to bring these issues into our community’s conversations and decisions.

The Access Shabbat service will include special readings from *Siddur Sha’ar Zahav*, along with texts from other sources, but we want to feature your contributions and experiences too, so part of the service will be shaped by you. If you want to participate, pick a question that resonates with you, and write a brief one-to-three sentence response.

1. When did disability or chronic illness first show up in your life or in the life of someone you knew?
2. Is there an experience in your life which challenged or changed what you had previously been told or taught about disability or chronic illness?
3. What is your current relationship to disability or chronic illness, and what does improving access mean to you in that context?

Email your response to [CSZAccess@gmail.com](mailto:CSZAccess@gmail.com), and it may end up in the service. Responses can be either signed or anonymous, but no names will be used in the service.



# Turn, Turn, Turn



To Everything  
There is a season  
And a time to every purpose, under Heaven

A time to be born, a time to die  
A time to plant, a time to reap  
A time to kill, a time to heal  
A time to laugh, a time to weep

A time to build up, a time to break down  
A time to dance, a time to mourn  
A time to cast away stones, a time to gather stones together

A time of love, a time of hate  
A time of war, a time of peace  
A time you may embrace, a time to refrain from embracing

[1950s folk song written by Pete Seeger]

I grew up believing that Pete Seeger wrote these words found in chapter three of the Book of Ecclesiastes and traditionally ascribed to King Solomon. In 1965, the year I was born, the American folk rock band The Byrds, took "Turn! Turn! Turn! (to Everything There Is a Season)" and made it an international hit and a household lyric. For me, it remains a beloved text reminding me that all things have their time.

As life progresses and we encounter anything that changes—and everything does—we often find ourselves faced with yet another ending that requires us once again to let go. New things come only after we let go of old things. But, as true as that is, most of us still don't like letting go of what is familiar.

Letting go requires us to acknowledge deep down that there is something which we can trust. For most of us, that knowledge is fleeting; we know it and then we forget. It needs to be remembered and recovered again and again in every new phase of our life.

At times this knowing is palpable to us and we readily feel we can rely upon it. We know that the Divine Breath of All Life, *Ruach haElohim*, is at work in the world, inspiring springtime grasses and flowers, all creatures great and small and people to come into being, to blossom and to bear fruit.

There are other times, though, when all that is obvious to us is that we have energies to exert, wills to assert, decisions to make and things to do so that existing structures won't fall apart and so that new realities can come into being.

Living in this is hard. To assert oneself and to then let go. To connect with others and to then let them go. To hold on to what we cherish and to then let go.

Every parent has to learn this, as does every teacher, leader, friend, lover, family member and every person who works for organizational transformation and community change.

To live in this world  
you must be able  
to do three things:  
to love what is mortal;  
to hold it  
against your bones knowing  
your own life depends on it;  
and, when the time comes to let it go,  
to let it go.

from the poem "In Blackwater Woods" by Mary Oliver

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Congregation Sha'ar Zahav is a member of the Union for Reform Judaism, the World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Jews, and the San Francisco Organizing Project



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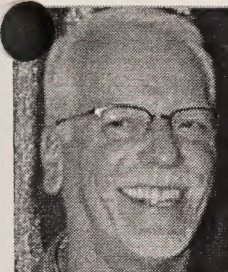
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Nancy Levin, Laura Lowe, Andrew Ramer,  
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# Two Messages



## URJ Biennial

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav joined the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) in 1981. Our membership provides us with a variety of resources geared to help our community connect with other Reform congregations throughout North America and thereby to flourish. There's a nice coincidence, in that the title we gave our Strategic Plan was *Nitchabeir v'Nifrach: Connect and Flourish*.

Our strategic path of deepening connections with each other within our congregation strengthens us and enables us to continue to flourish. I believe we should simultaneously look to increasing the connections available to us outside our own membership roster.

Every other year, the URJ stages an incredible five-day event that presents an opportunity to establish connections with 900 other congregations. The most recent Biennial was held last December with 5,000 attendees. The Program Guide for workshops, learning activities and worship services filled 92 pages. A sampling of topics from the guide included:

A Systematic Approach to Enhance Jewish Learning and Teen Initiatives

Caring Communities as Catalysts to Communities of Belonging and Connection

Advocating for Religious Rights in Israel

What Mussar Has Done for Our Community

I selected those four topics as examples from the 32 workshop choices available in a 90 minute time slot on a single day. I didn't bother to count how many total workshops were offered over the five days or to list the gamut of topics they covered. Suffice it to say that there are great learning opportunities at the Biennial. But there is much more beyond learning.

By virtue of the interaction between presenters and participants, the Biennial is bi-directional. Those who attend the workshops have as much to offer to the people in the room as the presenters do. Problem-solving techniques and creative ideas are freely shared with others. Coming from a unique setting like Congregation Sha'ar Zahav positions a CSZ dele-

gate to discuss experiences that a delegate from Middle America may not have encountered before the Biennial. We have contributed much to these dialogues in our 30-plus years of membership.

Unfortunately, there were only two delegates from Sha'ar Zahav at this year's Biennial. Daniel Chesir and I could only cover a few of the workshops in each of the time blocks. Those opportunities for learning and teaching are gone. There is, however, plenty of time to assemble a larger CSZ representation at the 2015 Biennial in Orlando. I'll be going. In the spirit of Connect and Flourish, who wants to join the Biennial Chavurah and help plan for what we can offer the Reform Movement in North America?

## Dolores Street Parking

It is not legal to park along the median strip of Dolores Street at any time. This is a fact which needs to be stated plainly and clearly.

Contrary to the law, we park in front of the synagogue on Friday nights and Saturday mornings during our religious services. In our neighborhood, where many houses of worship are located, it seems as though every faith takes its turn in violating this law.

A number of tickets have been issued recently to CSZ members who were attending services. Our Administrator Regina Wurst has been working diligently with the Police Captain at Mission Station to correct the misunderstanding between police officers on the beat and our parking *minhag* (tradition).

We believe the misunderstanding has been corrected, but we must cooperate by parking correctly. Please be sure to park parallel to the median strip (not perpendicular to the street in the median gaps where cars make U-turns). Tickets should not be issued during services, when cars are parked properly and have cones marking the line of CSZ attendees.

If you do, however, receive a ticket, please call the Mission Station Supervisor on Duty (415-558-5400) to report the error. Call right away, before the ticket is uploaded into the computer system. Once the ticket is uploaded, the police at Mission Station cannot reverse it. **Your best remedy is to call as soon as you see a ticket on your windshield.**

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# Purim at Congregation Sha'ar Zahav



BY ALAN GOLD

It's the time of year for the festival of Purim, which has evolved over the centuries into one of the most fun holidays in the Jewish calendar. Of course, it is based on the powerful story of Esther, Mordechai, Ahashueras and Haman and the saving of the Jews of Shushan from annihilation. Purim has become a holiday for reading the Megillah, dressing up as one of the story's characters, eating a Purim meal, drinking and putting on a Purim "spiel," usually a comic dramatization related to the theme of the Purim story.

During the very early years of Sha'ar Zahav, our Purim celebration was quite traditional: a reading of the Megillah, sharing some hamantashen, making noise with groggers when Haman's name was mentioned. Then something happened. It was the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, and our first member, Mark Feldman, was diagnosed in 1982. Around the time of Purim in 1983, he was very sick. Each of us sensed, maybe even unconsciously, that we needed some joy and fun in our congregational life. Thus was born "Megillah Madness."

Our first Megillah Madness Purim spiel was in 1983. Of course, the Purim story was told, but Mordechai (played by me) wore a poodle skirt and was gay. There was dancing in the spiel, and a wonderful costume party at the Jewish Community Center, where we were still meeting. The madness caught on. For the next three years, each year there was a different setting for the Purim story—one year it was set in the 20's and Mordechai (again, me) was a flapper, dancing the Charleston with Ahashueras (Steve Elman). Another year I was a Carmen Miranda character, also playing opposite Steve, as Ahashueras.



My favorite Megillah Madness was our final performance in 1986, held at the Women's Building. The spiel was an adaptation of the Divine movie, "Polyester," which we renamed "Polyesther." We had all of the usual characters (Mordechai had morphed into "Lolacai."). We lip-synched rock and roll songs, like "Natural Woman." The Divine character was played by David Gass, who put on a great performance. Five years later he would no longer be alive, so it was very important that he had this chance to be a star. The party itself was the best ever. I'll never forget Ron Lezell dressed as Krystle Carrington from "Dynasty." (S)he was ravishing.

By this time it was no accident that we needed some uplifting celebrations in our lives. More and more members and friends were getting sick and dying. This time it was not the survival of the Jews of Shushan that was in question, but our own survival. Without medications and only recently having learned about HIV as the cause of AIDS, we had little to turn to but our inner resources to divert ourselves with the playfulness and creativity that Purim offers. Those of us who participated in these annual Megillah Madnesses will never forget them.

After 1986 we lost the energy to create new spiels each year. There was a brief revival in the early '90s, of Megillah Madness. The last one had a square dance theme held at the Jewish Community Center with a professional caller. There would, of course, be the annual reading of the megillah and costume parties at the synagogue. We still like to celebrate the holiday with a reading of the megillah, costumes, food, dance, and being silly. But we'll never forget the creative energy, outrageous costumes, gay-themed stories and tremendous fun of the Megillah Madness spiels of thirty years ago.



# Upcoming Events



## Lattes and Liturgy

BY ELLIOTT VOGEL

Would you like to learn more about prayer while drinking your morning brew? If your answer to this question is an affirmative “yes” or even a tentative “maybe,” you might want to consider checking out the new “Lattes and Liturgy” class being offered at Sha’ar Zahav. Led by Cantor Sharon Bernstein, the class is designed as a collaborative, open model of study for the parents of Beit Sefer students, as well as the wider Sha’ar Zahav community.

“We would always see Beit Sefer parents getting coffee at nearby cafs Saturday mornings while their children attended services,” says Cantor Bernstein. With this in mind, the “Lattes and Liturgy” class was conceived as a way to create a kind of “café culture” at the synagogue. “Many of us grew up learning these prayers, learning Hebrew, by rote,” says the cantor. This class is designed to look in a deeper way at some of these prayers, “to delve into the meaning behind the words.”

At the last class, on Jan. 11, the attendees examined in detail the prayer “L’Chah Dodi,” as well as the poem “Ars Poetica” by Archibald MacLeish. “It was a delight,” says CSZ member Andrew Ramer. “Although we were meeting in the oneg room,” with Shabbat morning services taking place overhead, “I felt as if we were praying.”

The class is designed to incorporate learning related to Jewish prayer, to expand vocabulary, and to facilitate a deeper exploration of the Jewish concepts and words contained in individual prayers from the siddur. Cantor Bernstein draws on her twenty years of experience with liturgical music as she teaches. “The cantor has a unique ability to blend poetry, liturgy and prayer,” says Ramer.

For those interested in learning more, check out the next “Lattes and Liturgy” class on March 8, 10:15—11:15. Good coffee and eats will be provided.

## A Two-State Solution: Is It Possible?

PANEL DISCUSSION  
TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 7 PM

Sha’ar Zahav’s Middle East Dialogue and Programming Committee is bringing together an amazing panel of persons with strongly diverging views to discuss the topic, “A Two-State Solution: Is it Possible?” The panelists are Gordon Gladstone (J Street), Joel Beinin (Stanford University, Jewish Voice for Peace) and Roberta Seid (StandWithUs, UC Irvine). There will be facilitated group discussions and ample opportunities for questions and comments after the presentation.

Don’t miss this exciting program!

## Rabbi Joseph Edelheit

FRIDAY, MARCH 14, 7:30 PM

On Shabbat Zachor – the Sabbath of Remembrance – we will be joined by Rabbi Joseph Edelheit who will give a d’var torah entitled “Let’s Forget About Shabbat Zachor!”

Rabbi Joseph Edelheit is an accomplished educator who brings his passion for Judaism into classrooms, communities and congregations worldwide. His forty years of experience as a rabbi overlap with more than twenty-five years as a university professor. Currently, he is the Director of Religious and Jewish Studies at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota. He is an international lecturer, published author, noted public speaker, and a San Francisco native who graduated from Lowell High School.



# Chicken Soup

With flu season around the corner here's a favorite recipe from *Out of our Kitchen Closets*.

Leslie Bergson was one of our earliest women leaders. She is now an ordained rabbi living in Los Angeles.

We thank her, once again, for this little bit of Jewish healing.

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## 'SICK IN BED' CHICKEN SOUP

4 to 6 quarts water  
1 whole 3 to 4-pound chicken, including neck and gizzard (but not liver) and feet, if possible  
4 or 6 carrots, peeled and cut into thirds  
3 or 4 stalks celery, cut into thirds  
1 large onion, peeled and quartered  
2 or 3 garlic cloves, halved  
2 to 3 teaspoons chopped fresh parsley (less if dried is used)  
1 to 2 teaspoons chopped dill weed (less if dried is used)  
Salt and pepper to taste

Serves 6 to 8

2 to 3 hours to prepare

Leslie Bergson

I'd love to tell you that this soup has been passed down through the generations of women in my family, but the truth is I worked it out myself one day when I had a particularly nasty flu. I knew it was good, though, when I served it to my best and oldest friend and she said, "When did your mother bring this over?" The one ingredient that makes this soup really special is fresh dill.

- Crawl to the store and buy the ingredients, or, better yet, call up and get someone to do it for you.
- Fill a large, heavy-bottomed pot three-fourths full of water. Add the chicken, carrots, celery, onion and garlic. Bring to a boil over high heat, then cover and simmer over medium heat while you go back to bed and take a nap for an hour.
- Crawl back to the kitchen and add the parsley, dill, salt and pepper and cover again.
- Go back to the bed and take another nap for an hour or two. By the time you get up, it will be ready.
- Serve in a half-filled deep bowl so you don't spill it all over the bed.

Long a symbol of fertility and prosperity to Jews throughout the world, chickens (and chicken soup) became a traditional part of Jewish weddings and new year's celebrations.

For Jews of little means, it was the golden glow of chicken soup that conveyed the promise, at least, of an abundant life.

Today we marvel at the near-mythical curative powers of chicken soup. Modern medical researchers (or most Jewish parents and grandparents) have come to agree that there's almost nothing as good as a bowl of hot chicken soup for a cold or the flu.

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But the main reason chicken soup is so popular in the Jewish community is obvious: what would we float those fluffy matzo balls in if weren't for chicken soup?



## The Test of Inclusion

(continued from page 1)

The story of Abraham & Isaac challenges us to step up as a community to the tests in front of us, specifically the ongoing and evermore demanding test of inclusion, what our rabbi has referred to as "radical inclusion," providing a safe and welcoming home for all. Let's recommit ourselves to showing up for all who come through these doors for healing, learning, belonging and spiritual practice, pushing ourselves to embrace all of the diversity in this shul and in the world we are living in today. Inclusion is not just a mitzvah or duty to perform that benefits people with special

needs; it is also an opportunity to learn from and be inspired, lifted up, by those among us who learn or think or relate differently.

Anna and I were trailblazers here with her bat mitzvah, and the community rose to the occasion with flying colors. We need to pick up where we left off, harnessing the compassion, creativity and commitment to radical inclusion that is at the core of who we are.

*A link to the full drash is available on our website.*



# Children's Education Board



**THE CHILDREN'S** Education Board (CEB) is a collaboration between our educator and our members to evaluate and strengthen our children's programming in all its facets.

Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer's excellent components include our teachers, curriculum and our engaging special programs. Behind-the-scenes the Children's Education Board (CEB), comprised of parents and non-parents, supports the school through innovation, creativity and feedback.

Two current CEB members speak about their participation:

**Larry Best:** I've established new relationships with other parents and board members. My skills in giving a drash on the weekly parsha have improved. My own Jewish knowledge has increased at the same time as I gain understanding of the important elements in a high quality children's education curriculum. I have learned to be better at transmitting a strong Jewish identity to my children. My children see me as a positive role model for Jewish learning.

**Jim Greenberg:** I love being on the CEB! Our meetings are always a hoot. With a blend of humor and serious thought, it

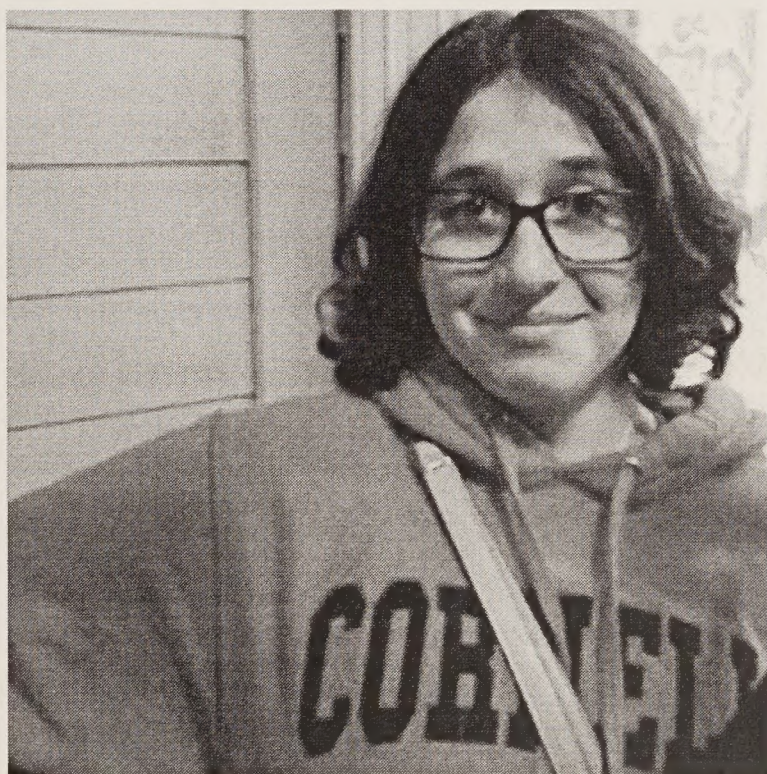
is a great way to assist in shaping the educational experience of our youth. Meetings are wonderfully collaborative, so that I always feel upon leaving the meeting that my mind was stretched in new and creative ways! Above all else, it means working closely with Rebecca—seriously, what is not to love about that!

Board members are selected from among those who volunteer and want to deepen their involvement with the Congregation.. The CEB meets monthly during the school year and we have an all-day retreat in August. Our last retreat focused on prayer and spirituality. Many of the insights and learnings from the retreat have been reflected in this year's curriculum. If you have been looking for a new way to become involved in our community, please join us at our next meeting on **Monday, March 10** at Sha'ar Zahav. We begin at 6:30 and our meetings are rich in good food, Jewish learning and community building. I am eager to speak with you about the CEB and would welcome the opportunity to engage you more deeply in the education of our children. Write to me at [Rebecca@shaarzahav.org](mailto:Rebecca@shaarzahav.org).

## Introducing the Bat Mitzvah

### Eliana Frank

Eliana will be called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah on March 22, 2014. Eliana divides her time between Novato, where she lives with her dads Michael Frank and David Adams and goes to Hamilton School, and San Francisco, where she lives with her mom, Tiela Chalmers. No matter where she lives, Eliana can usually be found with her nose in a book, and she loves watching movies. She loves travel, and has been to Peru, Malaysia, Ireland, France, and Mexico. She also loves everything Disney, and idolizes Edna Mode (from *The Incredibles*). Eliana is considering a career as a movie director, an anthropologist or a writer. Her favorite quote is "Imperfection is beauty; madness is genius. And it's better to be absolutely ridiculous than absolutely boring." (Marilyn Monroe.) For her mitzvah project Eliana volunteers at a monthly legal clinic offering brief advice to low-income San Franciscans. She is grateful to Randy Weiss and Miki Goralsky for their support and mentoring.





# Our Legacy Community Supporting My Home Away From Home

BY JERRY NODIFF

I am a long-time member of a local Reform temple in LA. My temple here is my "second family," and includes friends I have known for over 35 years. It is a warm and caring community. I have chosen to include both it and Sha'ar Zahav in my Living Trust in different ways and for different reasons.

With Sha'ar Zahav, I knew Daniel Chesir before the idea of

forming a shul was a gleam in his eye (and in the eyes of others). I have worshipped with you in at least three of your homes, and CSZ is my "spiritual home away from home."

For at least the last 50 years of my life, Tikkun Olam has been a passion for me. I understand the potential and power community organizing groups like SFOP can have, and the need for caring activities like food banks. I find much comfort and contentment in knowing that with my passing this passion will live on in CSZ.

The following have all submitted Letters of Intent to leave a bequest to CSZ. Many thanks, once again, to you all.

Your name could be on this list too! Please email if you would like a letter: [irene.ogus@gmail.com](mailto:irene.ogus@gmail.com)

Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Rabbi Camille Shira Angel  
Marianne Balin  
Jesse (Shai) Begley  
Dan Bellm & Rabbi Yoel Kahn  
Wayne Bender  
Ray Bernstein  
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Frank Yellin & Mark Showalter  
Jonathan Zimman  
Mike Zimmerman  
Ami Zussman



# Choosing Judaism

BY RABBI ANGEL

In a recent J. the Jewish Newsweekly of Northern California opinion piece entitled, "Is Conversion the Only Path To Judaism?" two views are offered.

I have some personal experience with this subject as a rabbi who, over the last eighteen years, has served in two very different kinds of congregations and worked with nearly 200 individuals who are on a journey to become serious Jews.

Each story is unlike the other. I have met people who have some sense of having been Jewish in a prior lifetime; I have met people who have taken their time over many years of experiencing and practicing Jewish ritual yet still choose not to actually convert. Some of them I call "Jews by association." Sometimes people have asked me whether or not they have to believe in God in order to convert to Judaism. How many of us know Jews who are atheist or agnostic? One's theology does not dictate one's identity as a Jew. Can you convert and take on the identity of a "cultural Jew"?

I was taught that the singular way to enter into the covenant (if you are not born into the covenant) is to make a

commitment to keep its laws and customs. The ethical commandments are part of the fabric of Western civilization. Seeing to the widow and the orphan, the hungry and the homeless, these are mandates recognized universally. What distinguishes you as a Jew?

Whenever I sit on the Beit Din as a judge and witness, my favorite question to ask the candidate is as follows: What does your Judaism look like in everyday life? It's not enough to feel that you're Jewish, you have to behave as a Jew ought to behave.

Here at Sha'ar Zahav, Jews by Choice have enlivened our community in myriad ways. Those who have chosen to make Judaism's ancient spiritual ways and practices relevant and compelling anew inspire us every time we watch them hold the Torah in their arms and recite the words praising the Oneness. When I think of the many people with whom I have worked with as they traveled on their journey to Judaism, once again I count my blessings. I am one lucky rabbi.

We are starting a new column. As you read the words of those who've made this decision, perhaps you will want to reconnect to your spiritual inheritance, too. It is never too late.

## Why I Chose Judaism

BY WENDY BRUMMER

My mezuzah hangs on the left side of my door jam. According to tradition, it's supposed to be on the right. But I have a unique front door: it's three glass panels and I can't even reach the far right jam because there are pots of herbs and flowers in the way.



But it's not just that the mezuzah's on the left. It is also on the inside of the door, not on the outside of the jam. To make matters even worse, it's not actually in the upper third of the jam because this door is 9 feet high and I wanted my mezuzah to be at my eye height, around 4'8".

My mezuzah, made of hand-cut stainless steel, is a little composite of a Torah scroll, colorful beads, a Shin, little gems and a Magen David. It's absolutely gorgeous and when I see it, I feel my heart expand with warmth and love. I utter the

Shema and often transition into Bob Marley's One Love. It's my tradition; my own unique Jewish mindfulness ritual and an example of why I have chosen Judaism as the core of my spiritual practice. The ancient rich historical traditions, the rhythm of the seasons interlaced with the holy days, reading and garnering the lessons of the Torah over and over, the opportunity to sing praises and honor our ancestors in community with my fellow congregants; it all feeds me in a way that sustains me in my busy life as a mother of two young adults, full-time employee and active volunteer. For this, I am so grateful to have found kindred spirits at Congregation Sha'ar Zahav.

*Congregation Sha'ar Zahav sponsors an annual Journey to Judaism discussion group open to all. It begins each fall and meets monthly for six months. At each session we hear from one of our own who has made the journey. Look for announcements next September and register for the next session.*



# Integrating Mindfulness at Sha'ar Zahav

Sha'ar Zahav has been selected to participate in the Institute for Jewish Spirituality's Tikkun Middot Project, a ground-breaking initiative to integrate mindfulness practice and character development in 28 Jewish faith communities. Each community will be supported in this project by clergy and lay leaders trained in mindfulness practice. Sha'ar Zahav has been awarded a \$7,500 grant to implement our plan to infuse mindfulness and character development throughout our adult and children's education programs.

In our grant proposal, we wrote that "we want to attract Jews home to learn from their own spiritual inheritance these core teachings and ways to practice on a daily basis, a Jewish Mindfulness approach. With this opportunity, we have a chance to be explicit about our intentions to grow along Jewish spiritual lines. These *middot*, or chosen ethical values, can point the way toward helping us articulate our goals for congregational and individual spiritual health."

Our participants, Rabbi Angel, Rebecca Weiner, Ann Bauman, Ali Cannon, Kim Haveson, Susan Lubeck and Mark Pressler, will engage in an intensive ten-month program of integrating mindfulness with the cultivation of specific core middot, such as humility, patience, honor, mindful speech, and trust. They will then lead a group of other staff and congregational members in a similar process utilizing the same curriculum. Subsequently our objectives are to integrate this curriculum and approach throughout all aspects of congregational life.

Our grant proposal stated: "It is our hope and intention that, when conflicts arise in the community, when factions divide us and disagreement creates painful rifts, we will all have the tools and faith to find a better, healing reparative way through. The health of our community as a whole affects its individual members, adults and children, as well as the larger community with which we engage in social action, interfaith projects and everyday life."

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# Bisexual Summit at the White House

BY MARTIN RAWLINGS-FEIN

**W**hen I worked on the Bisexual Invisibility Report with the San Francisco Human Rights Commission, I established myself as a bisexual leader in the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition to this work, I also organize the Bi/Trans Brunch for the Bay Area Bisexual Network (BABN). For my volunteer leadership in the bisexual community, I was invited to speak at the White House during Bisexual Awareness Week, along with 32 internationally known bisexual leaders. I was introduced to many people that I knew of, yet never met outside the internet, an intergenerational, multi-faith, and culturally mixed group with whom I would be working in order to present community recommendations to government policy makers.

I was suddenly recharged and ready to attack the issues, like the fact that bisexuals are highly stigmatized. In fact, in a recent national survey, bisexuals were considered one of the

least desirable when people were asked to rank who they would like to be their neighbors. At the White House summit, bisexual leaders made some real steps toward improve things. Not only did the government acknowledge that bisexuals are a distinct group, by inviting us to speak, but there was an acknowledgement from the Mayor of Washington D.C. of Bisexual Pride Awareness Day itself on September 23rd.

One idea that was consistently voiced at the event was the need for "Nothing About Us Without Us." This statement is not just a catchy phrase; it is a call to researchers, politicians, community organizations and the rest of the public to engage with the issues alongside the bisexual community, rather than speaking for us. We also realized that, in order for bisexuality to be acknowledged as a valid identity, bisexuals have to stick together as a community and work with allies and sometimes people who are not allies yet, to reach the goal of ending the stigma and becoming better understood by monosexual communities.

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# How We Choose Members for the Va'ad

BY KAREN SCHILLER, CHAIR,  
NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

**S**ha'ar Zahav's Board of Directors, which we call by the Hebrew word *Va'ad*, consists of six officers (the president, three vice-presidents, a treasurer and a recorder (secretary)) and nine members, plus the immediate past president who is ex-officio (non-voting). The president's term is two years, the other officers' terms are one-year each and Va'ad members' terms are three years. Va'ad members' terms are staggered so that only three new members are elected at any one time (although, if someone has to leave the Va'ad early for personal reasons, we may elect a fourth person to finish out the leaving member's term).

At our Annual Meeting, usually held every year in May, the congregation votes for officers and members of the Va'ad. In order to put together a slate of candidates, the president, with consent of the Va'ad, appoints a Nominating Committee. Our by-laws require that the committee has five members of the Congregation, none of whom can stand for election that year. Some years ago, we decided that one of the five committee members should be a past president, one should be a current

Va'ad member who is leaving the board and one should be someone from the prior year's Nominating Committee, with the last two members being chosen from the congregation.

The Nominating Committee looks at the current composition of the Va'ad and talks with other lay leaders and with staff to decide what skills, knowledge and representation is needed on the Va'ad, and to determine who might be a good candidate. The Committee also solicits input from the whole congregation. Then the Committee's job is to convince people to be candidates for election.

A congregant may also decide to run for office by submitting to the Nominating Committee at least 45 days prior to the election a petition signed by at least 10 members in good standing.

The list of all nominees and petition candidates is sent out to all congregants two weeks prior to the annual meeting.

This year, we need to fill three three-year positions (with much thanks to departing members Ann Bauman, Sara Haber and Richard Meyerson) and one two-year position (Julia Weber, who was elected last year, needed to step down early). If you have some thoughts about who should be on the Va'ad or are interested in running for a Va'ad position yourself, please email [kschiller@igc.org](mailto:kschiller@igc.org).

## CHAVURAH CORNER

Chavurah: A circle of friends, from the Hebrew *chaver* meaning friend or companion

# Hatch a Chavurah of Your Own

BY KAREN SCHILLER AND THE  
CONNECTIONS TASKFORCE

**A**t the October 20th "Chavurah Hatchery," about 20 Sha'ar Zahavniks met to learn about what has worked well and not so well for current CSZ chavurot, and to come up with ideas for chavurot we were interested in forming or joining. This list has been running in the weekly email and some have already had their first meeting. There's still time, however, for you to join or create a Chavurah that suits you.

If you missed the Hatchery, you may be wondering "What is a chavurah beyond being 'a circle of friends'? How does one work?" Here's a basic guide to creating a Sha'ar Zahav Chavurah:

## What is a Chavurah?

A CSZ Chavurah is a group of Sha'ar Zahav members with shared interests who meet on a regular basis to enrich their lives by socializing, learning, and celebrating Jewish life together. Chavurah members may start as strangers, but soon become friends who greet each other on Shabbat, sit together at High Holiday services, celebrate each other's joys, and support each other in times of sorrow.

## What does a Chavurah do?

Whatever your members decide to do together! The content, structure and goals of your Chavurah are up to you; it would be a good idea to talk about this at your first meeting, and to re-visit this conversation now and again to make (continued on page 14)



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in honor of Ro'e Zaid's bat mitzvah.

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**Karen Brown & Sherri Conrad** in honor of Jonathan Funk for playing at our wedding.

**James Carlson** in memory of Joan Jamar and in memory of Billye Heath, mother of Sharon Heath.

**James Carlson** in honor of Shoshana Levenberg's milestone birthday.

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in memory of Linda Ross, sister of Beth Ross & sister-in-law of Laura Turpin.

**Ami Zusman** in honor of Jacob Greenberg-Bell's bat mitzvah, in memory of Linda Beth Ross, sister of Beth Ross & sister-in-law of Laura Trupin.  
in memory of Benjamin Herzl Saperstein.

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Thank you to these generous sponsors:

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#### October 18-19

Flowers sponsored by Tamar Gershon *in honor of Eliana Gershon's bat mitzvah*

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#### November 8-9

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Oneg sponsored by Martin Tannenbaum and Alex Ingersoll *in memory of Larry Tannenbaum*

Flowers sponsored by the Augusta & Zaid family *in thanks to our Sha'ar Zahav community for supporting Ro'e on his bar mitzvah*

Shabbat Kiddush luncheon sponsored by the Augusta & Zaid family *in honor of Ro'e Zaid's bar mitzvah*

#### December 20-21

Oneg sponsored by Joss Eldredge *in loving memory of Phyllis Mintzer and in honor of George Mintzer*

#### December 27-28

Oneg sponsored by anonymous *in memory of Phyllis Mintzer*

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Oneg Sponsored by Michael and Jane Rice *in memory of Michael's mother, Paula Yagour Rice*

#### January 17-18

Flowers sponsored by Jeffrey Lilly *in memory of his mother, Dolores Hulsey*

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#### January 31-February 1

Oneg sponsored by Fred and Howard Hahn *in memory of their wife and mother, Helga Hahn*

## Hatch a Chavurah of Your Own

(continued from page 12)

sure the Chavurah is meeting all the members' needs. While it's not required, we strongly encourage you to bring Jewish content to whatever you do, and the clergy and lay leaders are available to help you think about this. And don't forget food!

## When does a Chavurah meet?

Each Chavurah usually meets once a month. The group will decide on the most convenient dates and times based on the schedules of all its members.

## How large is a Chavurah?

There are no rules about the group size, but 6—10 people is a comfortable number for conversation and getting to know one another. A Chavurah can decide to allow "drop-ins," to

have public gatherings, or to keep the group small and self-contained. No matter what the format, however, it is important that there is a group of people committed to keeping the Chavurah running smoothly.

## Who can join a Chavurah?

A Chavurah is for Sha'ar Zahav members, but group members can decide to allow visitors or guests to join them from time to time.

Remember, if you would like to join a Chavurah, check out the list in the weekly email. Don't see something that interests you? Then think about starting the Chavurah you want. Email [connections@shaarzahav.org](mailto:connections@shaarzahav.org) to add your Chavurah to the list.



## Condolences

Our condolences to

Alan Berenstein on the death of his uncle, Bob Radetsky.

Ora Prochovnick on the death of her cousin, Shalom Zmirin.

Beth Ross, Laurie Trupin, Maia and Elias Ross Trupin on the death of their sister, sister-in-law and aunt, Linda Beth Ross.

Jay Cohen on the death of his father, Phillip Cohen.

Laureen Kim on the death of her brother, Dennis Kim.

Rebecca Weiner on the death of her father, Ernest Weiner.

Howard Steiermann on the death of his close friend, Renee Krauss.

Sharon Heath, Lisa Katz and Miriam and Rose Katz on the death of their mother, mother-in-law, and grandmother, Billye L. Heath.

Wayne Bender on the death of his father, Herman Bender.

## Naches

Mazel Tov to

Eliana Gershon on her bat mitzvah.

Jacob Greenberg-Bell on his bar mitzvah.

Ro'e Zaid on his bar mitzvah.

## Welcome to New and Returning Members

Deborah Cohler

Mark Epstein & Mark Bliss, Joann & Taylor Epstein-Bliss

Steven Weiler

## Member Yahrzeits

### March

- 6 Pearl Lewin
- 7 Isabel Fishman
- 8 Seth Charney
- 16 Theodore Mendonca Jr.
- 16 Jamie Rosen
- 21 Rabbi Sanford Lowe
- 23 Noah Nacamulli
- 23 Paul Nemrow
- 28 Neill Rosen
- 31 James Harris Freedgood
- 31 Marvin Steele

### April

- 1 Adam Harris
- 2 Ronald Gertz
- 3 Abraham Cohen
- 6 Dennis Mitchell
- 21 Robert Serman
- 23 Michael Randall
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